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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships between self-concepts of beginning teachers as measured before and after internship experiences with mentors. The expectations and attitudes of 138 beginning teachers participating in the Indiana Beginning Teacher Internship Program were sought before and after participation. Instruments used in the study were the Self-Perception Inventory and Beginning Teachers' Questionnaires. Significant differences were found between beginning teachers' expectations and their actual experiences: there was a growth in the extent to which beginning teachers felt adjusted to their teaching responsibilities and successfully created relationships with mentors. Differences were also found between the beginning and ending attitudes toward education of elementary teachers: increasingly, more consideration was given to new ideas and a new attitude developed toward the mentors, who no longer were seen as interfering with their professional lives. In the area of self-concept, the teacher scale of above average in both the pre-test and the post-test indicated a pattern of persistence. Some suggestions and recommendations are made on implementing a mentoring program. (JSD)

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The Impact of Mentoring on First Year Teachers

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The Impact of Mentoring on First Year Teachers

by Linda H. Chiang, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana

Introduction

The first year of teaching is a critical year (Hoffman et al.,1986). Studies of experienced, effective teachers show they base much of their decisions on whether to remain in teaching on the quality of their first year's teaching experiences (Holmes Group, 1986;Chapman, 1984). The first year may also influence the attitudes and values about teaching that beginning teachers will hold (Shulman & Calbert,1987).

Copeland's (1986) study indicated novice teachers seldom possess all the qualities and capabilities of ideal teachers. Fox and Singletary's (1986) study explained this is so because few preservice teacher education programs can prepare teachers to completely fulfill the responsibilities, time commitments, and cope with the isolation that can occur as they move from trainees to teachers. Therefore, beginning teachers often concentrate on survival skills alone. Concentrating on survival skills may leave limited energy to be devoted to continuing to learn and to holding high standards of effective practice (Feiman Nemser, 1983) or to developing positive self concepts as teachers.

Indiana started a Beginning Teacher Internship Program(BTIP) in 1988-1989 to help beginning teachers cope with the teaching environment and to develop increased skills in teaching strategies with help from mentors. Mentor teachers' assistance to novice teachers is reported to be most successful when all novice teachers in a school are assigned to single experienced teachers who serve as their primary support persons. More successful pairings of mentor and novice teachers occur when both teach at the same grade level or in the same subject matter area (Gray & Gray, 1985).

According to the Indiana Internship Rule, the following support will be offered by mentors and principals to beginning teachers:

(1) assist beginning teachers in the performance of their duties;
(2) identify teaching skills and educational practices necessary for excellence in teaching
(3) evaluate the performance of beginning teachers by principals (Beginning Teachers Internship Program Handbook, 1988).

However, Combs (1969) stated success in one's occupation seems largely dependent upon a person's belief about self. Combs further indicated that teachers' self-concepts necessarily affect professional practice, whether teachers are aware of such influences or not (p. 159). In addition, people with low self-concepts tend to lack confidence in their ability to function effectively (McCroskey & Wheeless, 1976). Several other researchers have noted the need for teachers to hold positive attitudes about themselves if they are to be effective (Jersild,1955; Combs, 1965; Purkey, 1970). McCall's(1978) study concluded teachers' self-concepts have positive relationships with teacher performance, while Diem's (1988) research showed the effectiveness of teaching has important relationships to teachers' self concepts.

Guskey (1984) has observed that many studies (McNeil & Popham,1973; Medley,1977;Soar & Soar,1972) together with the results from large-scale surveys

such as the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study by Fisher et al., (1978) have helped to identify factors of effectiveness of teachers that are related to student learning outcomes.

In the current study, beginning elementary teachers' self concepts were measured before and after a school year of participation in the Indiana Beginning Teacher Internship Program. Judgments by principals were included to provide information about the program from sources outside the teachers themselves.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the relationships between self concepts of beginning teachers as measured before and after internship experiences. The study also collected the expectations and attitudes of beginning teachers and their views of the Beginning Teacher Internship Program before and after they participated in the Beginning Teacher Internship Program during the 1988-1989 academic year.

The research questions posted were:

1. Will there be significant differences in the self concepts of beginning elementary teachers from before participation to after participation in a first year of teaching with the support of an assigned, paid mentor?
2. Will there be significant differences between : 1) expectations and experiences, 2) the beginning and ending attitudes toward education, and 3) the beginning and ending views concerning teaching of first-year teachers participating with an assigned mentor?

Literature Review

Mentoring has existed for a long time. The famous Greek mythology stated that Mentor guided and advised Telemachus and helped him through young adulthood. Since then, mentor became the word to identify an experienced and trusted counselor. However, this type of mentoring was unplanned and can be called informal or "happenstance" mentoring (Gray & Gray, 1986). Only a few lucky ones can receive mentoring in their personal and professional development. To help professionals become more effective, there is a need for formal mentoring.

Teachers mentoring teachers was identified as one of the effective methods to accomplish staff development after "A Nation At Risk" and other national reports reminded the public of necessity of reforming teacher education (Ishler & Kester, 1987). A survey was conducted in 1985 to obtain information regarding the implementation of induction programs in the United States (Hawk & Roboard, 1987). Fifteen states out of fifty states at the beginning of 1986 had teacher induction programs in the planning stage, six states were piloting programs and ten states and the District of Columbia had statewide implementation. (see Chart 1)

A pilot study in Indiana for the academic year 1987-1988 showed evidence of 1) recognition of outstanding teachers, 2) decreased beginning teacher burn out, and 3) retention of good teachers. The positive feedback from the pilot study supported the continuous implementation of the induction program. In the academic year of 1989 , the Beginning Teacher Internship Program thus became a statewide program in Indiana.

Population and Instrument

The population of the study were beginning elementary teachers who were employed in the academic year 1989 in the State of Indiana. The frequencies, percentages and genders for participating beginning teachers for the pre- test are shown in Table 1 and 2. Table 3 and 4 include follow-up data from the post- test. The return rate for individuals completing both pre and post questionnaires was 62.3 percent.

Instruments used in this study included:

1. Self-perception Inventory (T): Form SCT : This instrument was developed by Soars and Soars in 1975. The test- retest reliability of SCT form was .89, the concurrent validity of teacher forms as .55 and the predictive validity as .59. This instrument was used both before and at the end of the academic year of 1989 to ascertain the changes of beginning teachers' self concepts.
2. Beginning Teachers' Questionnaires: These instruments were designed by the researcher specifically for use in this study and modified by a jury of four professional experts. These instruments were designed to determine the beginning elementary teachers' expectations/ experiences, attitudes, and views of education initially and after working with a paid mentor for the academic year of 1988-1989.

Procedures and Methodology

Near the beginning and the end of their first year of teaching, 138 beginning elementary teachers completed self perception instrument and responded to pre and post questionnaires that collected their expectations, attitudes and views toward teaching. Changes in beginning elementary teachers' responses from the start to the end of their first year were compared using a t test.

Data from 138 beginning elementary teachers (30% of the whole population) were collected in the Fall of 1988. End-of-year data from 86 beginning elementary who responded to both tests (19% of the whole population) were collected in May 1989. Statistical comparisons were made and analyzed with a t test at a .05 alpha level of confidence.

Findings

The important findings regarding beginning elementary teachers' self perceptions before and after one year of experience working with mentors are as follows:

-- There are 36 items in this part of study. The rating scales provide only four options including "Low", "Low- plus", "High-minus", and "High". The beginning teachers scaled above average in self concept. In the pre test, there is one discrepancy, the teachers may have viewed the adjectives in different ways. Some teachers may think "lenient" is better in classroom situation; some teachers may think "strict" is more desirable, or they may define the two terms in different ways.

Data from the post test regarding beginning teachers' self concept manifested a pattern of persistence in responses to the 35 items on the SCT Form. Researchers in the field of self concept find that persistence is an aspect of personality. The only item in the self concept instrument which yielded a significant difference from the pre test to post test was "cooperative" -- "uncooperative". Possibly, their experiences lead teachers to conclude that there

are limitations to working in a totally cooperative manner with parents and other teachers.

The significant findings in expectations are shown in Table 6. Most beginning elementary teachers expected a) to adjust to their teaching responsibilities; b) to share important information about their teaching with their mentors; c) to develop strong collegial relationships with their mentors; d) to share information about their professional strengths and limitations with their mentors; e) to discuss with their mentors any areas of concern without embarrassment or breach of confidentiality; f) to have meetings with their mentors to obtain help with their problems; and g) to work toward the same educational goals as their mentors.

Beginning elementary teachers' attitudes toward becoming teachers are shown in Table 7. Analysis of pre-experience data indicates beginning teachers held positive attitudes toward becoming teachers, especially on the following topics:
a) new ideas are necessary for maximum success of both teachers and mentors; b) new and different teaching strategies will make them more confident as teachers; c) methods courses will have great value to them; d) confidence that they can become more effective with help from teachers in addition to their mentors; and e) that student teaching was valuable in preparing them to be effective teachers.

Pre-test data from beginning teachers revealed the following views: a) the most difficult teaching responsibility will be classroom management and discipline (32.6%); b) they will need the most help with content selection (22.5%); c) seminars in ways to motivate students will improve their teaching (41.3%); d) the most important area they yet need to learn is curriculum development (61.6%); e)they will need conferences with mentors twice a week and for approximately fifteen minutes each, (34.1%); and f) that the area in which they will need the most help from mentoring programs are "evaluation processes", "effective teaching methods", "keeping up with paper work and school functions", and " determining individual student needs".

There were significant differences between beginning teachers expectations and their actual experiences. Analysis of data from ten out of 13 items yielded significant differences between before and after beginning elementary teachers experience working with paid mentors. The differences included the extent to which beginning teachers felt adjusted to their teaching responsibilities, shared important information about teaching, developed strong collegial relationships and shared information about professional strengths and limitations with mentors, successfully created relationships with mentors to discuss any areas of concern, meetings for mentors to assist problem solving, experienced important professional growth with mentors, improved self concept as teachers, and became more effective teachers helped by mentors.

There were significant differences between the beginning and ending attitudes toward education of beginning elementary teachers. Six out of ten items yielded significant differences. The differences included the extent to which beginning teachers give consideration to new ideas, the extent to which mentors interfered with their professional lives, learning different strategies made beginning teachers more confident as teachers, the principal did much to improve beginning teachers' effectiveness as teachers, and a wide range of

teaching strategies increased beginning teachers confidence and self-esteem as beginning teachers, and supportive relationships with other teachers made differences in beginning teachers' teaching.

There was a significant difference in the beginning and ending views concerning teaching of first-year teachers participating with an assigned mentor. One out of six items yielded a significant difference regarding the frequency of meeting with mentors. Analysis of data showed beginning teachers valued conferences with mentors from twice a week to more than twice a week.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The preliminary findings and the review of research suggest teachers serving as mentors should a) be evaluated and chosen carefully from veteran teachers, and b) review the program in which they are involved. The follow-up findings revealed beginning teachers suggested a) careful considerations in making matches is essential, and b) make the mentoring program known to potential teachers at college level.

Analysis of data from the teachers questionnaire reveals the mean of post-test lower than the pre-test. One possible explanation is that these beginning teachers became more realistic and will now function more effectively as they face the reality of teaching situations. One item strongly indicates the building principals helped beginning teachers improve their teaching (Mean from 1.31 to 3.70). Another interesting piece of evidence was in the pre-test respondents did not want their mentors to interfere in their personal lives; the post-test respondents did not object to such interference. The experience of the beginning teachers and the mentors resulted in more openness and less concern regarding concern for personal life interference (Mean from 4.08 to 1.32). Principals' involvement and matching mentors should be taken into account for the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Mentoring, done competently, has been demonstrated to have much value in other settings. This study yielded significant differences in the beginning elementary teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and views. However, mentoring should be an ongoing process. Based on the findings of this study , the researcher suggests the following recommendations in implementing mentoring.

1. Mentors should be selected from school teachers who have the positive attitudes and are willing to assume the responsibilities of mentoring.
2. Mentors should meet beginning teachers before the school begins so they can get acquainted before school starts.
3. A supportive team including college and department of education persons should be formed and funded by the state in order to offer continuous consultation to beginning teachers and their mentors. The committee members should focus upon discipline and classroom management, curriculum design, and problems with individual differences in students.
4. Principals should be reimbursed for their efforts in order to work more effectively with beginning teachers and mentors.
5. The first month of a beginning teacher's teaching should consider a half day of teaching and a half day of observing the mentor and other teachers teaching. The second month may release mentors to observe beginning teachers teaching or offer consultation
6. Second year teachers should participate in beginning teachers conferences in

order to share experiences and learn new teaching methods from other teachers. There is a need to collect feedback from second year teachers' to improve the mentoring program.

7. Both pre and post data shows classroom management and discipline were the most difficult teaching responsibilities (32.6% and 38.4%). Also the pre to post data indicate that the most important area needing strengthening was curriculum development (61.6% and 61.6%). Teacher training institutions should emphasize more practical training in classroom management, discipline and curriculum development in real classroom situations. Consultation should be offered through universities or other relevant organizations to solve discipline and curriculum problems.

Although there are not many significant differences in the extent of changes in self concept, the impact of the mentoring program can be seen as positive. The mentoring program helps the beginning teachers to see the realities of teaching, explore the relationships with mentors and other colleagues and administrators. The acceptance of one's own limitations can strengthen potential effectiveness. Becoming realistic is a mark of success in any program; thus, the mentoring program, based upon the findings, can be viewed as effective.

Statewide Activity Regarding Teacher Induction Programs

State	Implementing	Piloting	Planning	No Activity
Alabama				X
Alaska				X
Arizona				X
Arkansas			X	
California			X	
Colorado				X
Connecticut			X	
Delaware				X
District of Columbia	X			
Florida	X			
Georgia	X			
Hawaii				X
Idaho				X
Illinois			X	
Indiana			X	
Iowa				X
Kansas		X		
Kentucky	X			
Louisiana				X
Maine		X		
Maryland			X	
Massachusetts			X	
Michigan				X
Minnesota				X
Mississippi	X			
Missouri	X			
Montana				X
Nebraska			X	
Nevada				X
New Hampshire				X
New Jersey				X
New Mexico			X	
New York			X	
North Carolina	X			
North Dakota			X	
Ohio			X	
Oklahoma	X			
Oregon			X	
Pennsylvania		X		
Rhode Island				X
South Carolina	X			
South Dakota	X			
Tennessee			X	
Texas				X
Utah			X	
Vermont				X
Virginia	X			
Washington		X		
West Virginia		X		
Wisconsin		X		
Wyoming				X

(Hawk & Roboard, 1987)

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Table 1
Frequencies and percentages for participating beginning teachers' responding to pre test

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%	VALID%
1st Year Teacher	121	87.7	92.4
Out of State Teacher	10	7.2	7.6
No Indication	7	5.1	
Total	138	100	100

Table 2
Frequencies and percentages for participating beginning teachers' gender

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%	VALID%
Male	10	7.2	9.2
Female	99	71.7	90.8
No Indication	29	21	
Total	138	100	100

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages for Participating Beginning Teachers responding to Pre test and Follow-up

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%	VALID%
1st Year Teacher	76	88.4	97.4
Out of State Teacher	2	2.3	2.6
No Indication	8	9.3	
TOTAL	86	100	100

Table 4
Frequencies and Percentages for Participating Beginning Teachers by Gender

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	%	VALID%
Male	4	4.7	6.3
Female	59	68.6	93.7
No Indication	23	26.7	
TOTAL	86	100	100

Table 6
Evidence of Expectations /Experiences Held by Beginning Elementary Teachers at the Beginning/End of Participating in BTIP

VARIABLE	N		MEAN		SD	
1.INFORMED ABOUT BTIP	135	78	4.05	3.83	0.91	.95
2.ADJUST TO TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY	136	78	4.63	4.34	0.51	.62 *
3.SHARE INFORMATION W/ MENTOR	137	79	4.60	4.17	0.54	.94 *
4.DEVELOP COLLEGERIAL RELATIONSHIP W/MENTOR	137	79	4.61	4.14	0.59	1.02 *
5.SHARE PROFESSIONAL STRENGTHS W/MENTOR	137	79	4.52	3.99	0.57	.93 *
6.SHARE PROFESSIONAL LIMINTATIONS W/MENTOR	137	79	4.47	4.01	0.66	.98 *
7.CREATE RELATIONSHIP W/ MENTOR TO DISCUSS CONCERN	136	78	4.63	4.21	0.51	1.04 *
8.MEETINGS FOR MENTOR TO ASSIST PROBLEM SOLVING	136	79	4.56	4.01	0.57	1.15 *
9.WORK W/MENTOR TOWARD EDUCATIONAL GOAL	135	78	4.42	4.08	0.65	.96
10.EXPERIENCE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH W/ MENTOR	136	79	4.47	3.71	0.67	.13 *
11.IMPROVE SELF CONCEPT	136	79	4.11	3.38	0.92	.14 *
12.BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE HELPED BY MENTOR	136	79	4.48	3.77	0.72	.12 *
13.BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE HELPED BY ADVISOR	116	5	4.20	3.60	.37	.75

Table 7.
Evidence of Attitudes Held by Elementary Teachers at the Beginning/Ending of Participanting in BTIP

VARIABLE	N		MEAN		SD	
1.CONSIDERATION TO NEW IDEAS	137	79	4.60	3.92	0.66	.93 *
2. M SHOULD NOT INTERFERE BT PERSONAL LIFE	137	79	4.08	1.32	0.98	.70 *
3.LEARNING STRATEGIES MAKE BT MORE CONFIDENT	137	79	4.67	4.24	0.53	.60 *
4. SUPPORTIVE PRINCIPAL CAN DO LITTLE TO IMPROVE BT'S PERFORMANCE	137	79	1.30	3.70	0.81	.12 *
5. WIDE RANGE OF TEACHING STRATEGIES INCREASE BT'S SELF-ESTEEM	136	79	4.40	4.13	0.80	.81 *
6. SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP W/OTHER TEACHERS POSITIVE IN BT'S TEACHING	137	79	4.73	4.34	0.50	.92 *
7.BT'S STUDENT TEACHING HAS LITTLE VALUE	137	79	1.51	1.56	0.95	.90
8. BT'S METHODS COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY HAVE GREAT VALUE TO BT	136	79	3.78	3.56	.11	,11
9. BT BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE W/HELP FROM TEACHER OTHER THAN M	137	79	4.32	3.99	0.80	.11
10. ALL NEW TEACHERS IN INDIANA WOULD PROFIT IN BTIP	137	78	3.72	3.46	0.99	.14

BT stands for Beginning Teacher; M stands for mentor;